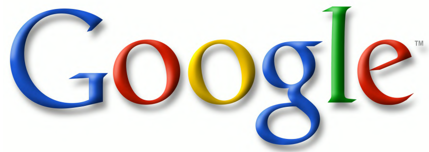

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# BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

# HON. JOSEPH DUNCAN

FIFTH GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS

BY

E. W. BLATCHFORD, L. L. D.

READ BEFORE

THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DECEMBER 5, 1905

ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION TO
THE SOCIETY OF GOVERNOR DUNCAN'S PORTRAIT
THE GIFT OF HIS GRANDCHILDREN
HON. WILLIAM CLEMENT PUTNAM AND
MISS ELIZABETH DUNCAN PUTNAM
OF DAVENPORT, IOWA

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Joseph Duncan

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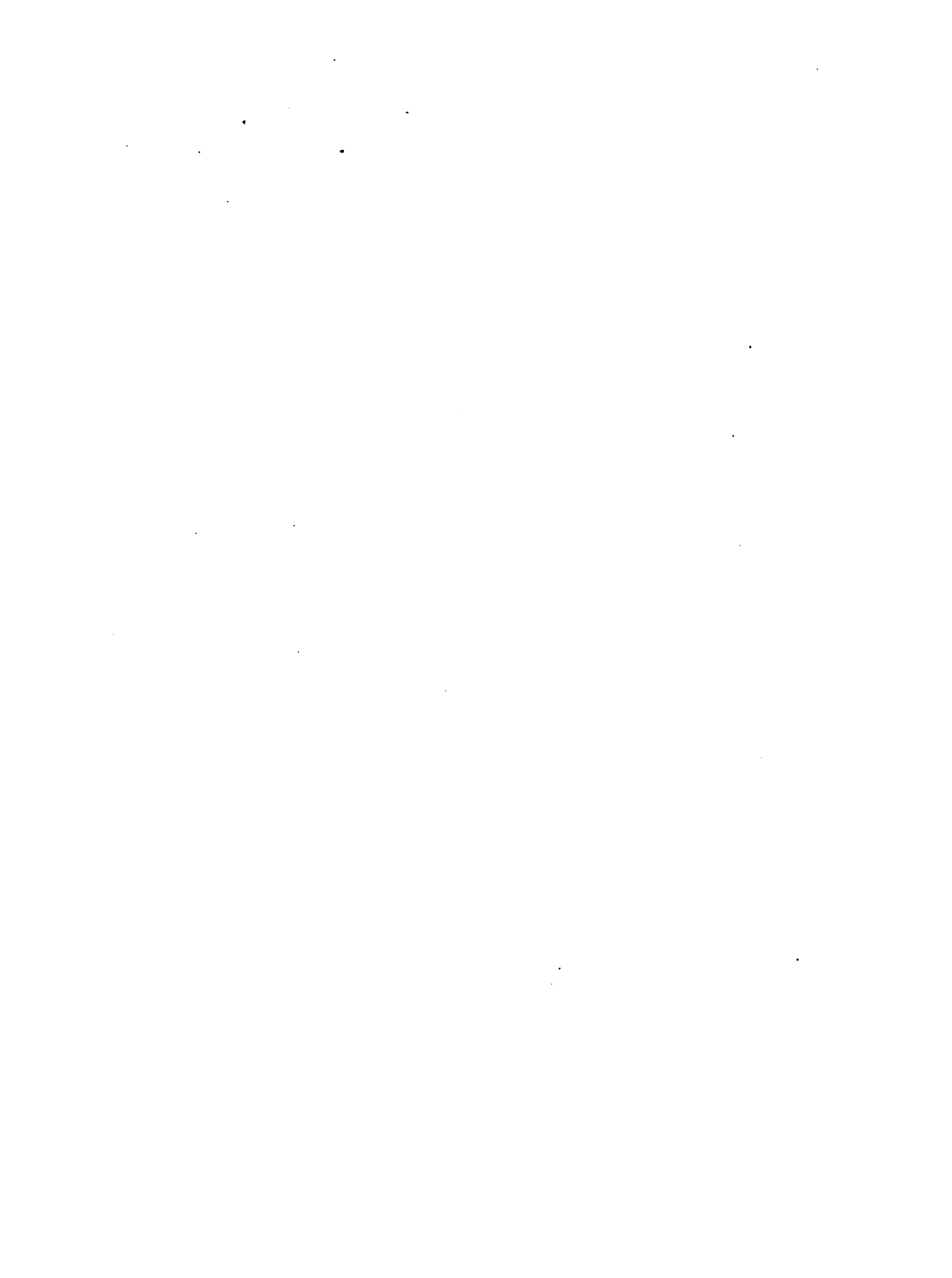

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF HON. JOSEPH DUNCAN.

It is an increasingly broad and interesting field of research that is covered by the Constitution of The Chicago Historical Society, adopted in 1856, "to institute and encourage inquiry, to collect and preserve the materials of history, and to spread historical information, especially concerning the Northwestern States." With enthusiasm and faithfulness was this work entered upon and carried forward, so that in fifteen years, in October, 1871, when the great fire swept our treasures away, with our building at that time called "strictly fireproof," our historical collections, including much original matter impossible to be replaced, excelled in richness any similar collection in the Northwest. From this statement should be excepted the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, which was founded in 1848, and that of Minnesota, founded in 1849. Thirty-four years have rolled away since this irreparable loss occurred, but the shelves of our library, the walls of this auditorium and of the Trustees' Room tell the generous response that has been made in the third of a century to the claims of this Society. We are this evening permitted to add another gift to this collection in the portrait of the Honorable Joseph Duncan, fifth Governor of the State of Illinois, from 1834 to 1841. The gift comes through the filial thoughtfulness of his grandchildren, Hon. William Clement Putnam and Miss Elizabeth Duncan Putnam of Davenport, Iowa, both of whom we are glad to greet this evening.

It is because of the old-time friendship between my parents and Governor Duncan and his family that I have been requested to present to you, Mr. President and Trustees, this portrait, which I would accompany with a brief statement regarding the life of Governor Duncan and the momentous years in which his beneficent influence was recognized in the gubernatorial chair. And in the work assigned me at this hour am I painfully reminded of our Society's loss to which reference has been made. "All the political papers, pamphlets and most of the letters which were in the possession of Governor Duncan's family, and

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which contained valuable information in regard to his public and private life, were sent to the Chicago Historical Society at the request of friends and contemporaries of his, who proposed to prepare and publish a sketch of his life for this Society. Before this work was accomplished, all these papers were destroyed "in the great fire of October 9th, 1871." I quote from a "Biographical Sketch of Governor Duncan," prepared by his daughter, the late Mrs. Julia Duncan Kirby, to which I am indebted for many points presented to-night.

Major Joseph Duncan, father of the Governor, was of Scotch ancestry, born in Virginia, from which he removed in 1790 to Paris, Kentucky, where, on February 22, 1794, his son Joseph was born. His mother was a woman of culture and refinement from Pennsylvania. His father was "distinguished among Kentucky's early settlers for intelligence and wisdom in counsel, and for bravery in repelling the incursions of the Indians." The thrilling narratives of Indian warfare to which Joseph Duncan listened as a boy from his father and his father's friends, and the warm friendships and generous hospitality witnessed in his home, contributed much to the formation of his character as a man, which was distinguished for the courage, heartiness and generosity, the characteristics of the better elements of pioneer life."

His father died when Joseph was but twelve years old. His filial character and reliable traits were evidenced by his appointment when twenty-one as "guardian" of his sister and younger brothers.

His patriotism early developed. In the war of 1812 "He enlisted in the Seventeenth Regiment of the United States Infantry, and before he left Lexington was promoted to the rank of ensign." "The course of the campaign on the Northwest frontier up to August, 1813, had thrown the main body of the American army under the immediate command of Gen. William Henry Harrison in northern Ohio, and the action in which his good conduct and gallantry were specially shown was in the successful defense of Fort Stephenson, or Lower Sandusky, against a large party of British and Indians, on August 2, 1813, by which the plan and purpose of the British campaign were wholly frustrated. This defense was one of the most brilliant achievements of the war, and was recognized by the Congress of the United States causing to be presented to Col. Croughan,

in command, a gold medal, and to each of the other officers a gold-mounted sword. This resolution was adopted on June 18, 1834, and the presentation of the sword was made by the Secretary of War, on March 11, 1837, through a letter addressed to 'His Excellency, Joseph Duncan, Governor of Illinois, Vandalia, Illinois.'"

In the fall of 1814 Lieut. Joseph Duncan was selected by the commanding officer at Detroit to command a company of one hundred and thirty infantry and rangers to watch the movements of the British army. He pitched his camp within twenty miles of the British army, beyond the head of the Thames river in Canada, where he remained exposed to the enemy's attacks throughout an inclement winter, during which time he captured several of their scouting or foraging parties, and sent them prisoners to headquarters. At the close of the war Lieut. Duncan returned to Kentucky and engaged in agricultural pursuits. But while in the army he had seen the fertile prairies of Illinois, and in 1818 this State became his home, and he settled in Kaskaskia. As I have reviewed the historical associations which cluster about this location, I appreciate the words of a writer who calls it the "birthplace or cradle of civilization in the valley of the Mississippi; its county became the center of intellectual activity, and was associated for years with more of historical interest than any other county in the State." Kaskaskia, sixty miles north of Cairo, founded by Marquette as a mission in 1674, an Indian village and French trading post in 1700; in the hands of the British, after the French-Indian war of 1765; captured by George Rogers Clark at the head of a force of Virginia troops, in 1778; here first occurred in our State the exercise of the elective franchise; and here in 1804 the United States had opened a land office, and it remained the Territorial capital till 1819, when the seat of government was removed seventy-five miles further north to Vandalia. Kaskaskia—the early historical home of our State—is to-day known no more. The steady encroachments of the Mississippi, whose resistless current knows no law, within a decade has swept away everything but the name.

It was in this year, 1819, that Illinois was admitted to the Union, as a State, and Vandalia became her capital.

Robert McLaughlin, an uncle of Joseph Duncan, was appointed State treasurer. He induced the family to move from that part of the State to Fountain Bluff upon the Mis-

sissippi, in Jackson County. Here began Joseph Duncan's honorable political career.

Preceded by the history of his gallant conduct in the war, Duncan's sound judgment, strong common sense and honorable bearing soon commanded the respect and esteem of his fellow citizens. He was rapidly promoted to the high rank of major-general of the militia, and in 1823, five years after his arrival, he was elected member of the State Senate. His influence in this body was soon recognized, and his appreciation of the country's needs, and of his own responsibilities was shown by his introducing at that early day—1824—an "Act for the establishment of Free Schools" in Illinois, which was approved January 15, 1824, and became a law. It was a wise law, carefully framed, and substantially the same as that now in force in this State. Were there time it would prove of interest to present this Act in full, a copy of which is before me as I write. In its comprehensivensss, in the clearness of its provisions for the establishment of public schools throughout the State, in the details of their administration by trustees, in their mode of support, etc., is illustrated the ability and conscientiousness of its author. I *will*, however, read the splendid preamble which introduced the act:

"To enjoy our rights and liberties, we must understand them; their security and protection ought to be the first object of a free people; and it is a well-established fact that no nation has ever continued long in the enjoyment of civil and political freedom which was not both virtuous and enlightened; and believing that the advancement of literature always has been, and ever will be, the means of developing more fully the rights of man, that the mind of every citizen in a republic is the common property of society, and constitutes the basis of its strength and happiness; it is therefore considered the peculiar duty of a free government, like ours, to encourage and extend the improvement and cultivation of the intellectual energies of the whole. Therefore be it enacted," etc.

"But the act was in advance of the age and the circumstances of the people, and was soon afterwards repealed." An illustration, amusing as we look back, of opposition to beneficent legislation, not yet by any means passed away, may here be mentioned. An old citizen of Jacksonville, in this State, speaking of this law, said: "I remember well the opposition there was to this school law on the part of

the poor people, who found that their children would be educated and wholly unfitted for work on the farm; the very class which the law was intended to benefit opposed it most bitterly!" It is interesting to compare this popular expression of 1825 with the official utterance of Hon. Edward J. James in his inaugural, as head of our State University, when he emphasized the strengthening by all possible means of this very public school system as a special responsibility of the State University. Such is the onward march of three-quarters of a century! It would prove a suggestive reminder of the privileges of to-day could a marble bust of Joseph Duncan, the fifth Governor of our State, with appropriate inscription, be placed in the Department of Pedagogy in our university at Champaign.

In 1826, in response to urgent calls, Mr. Duncan became a candidate for the Twentieth Congress. His opponent, Daniel Pope Cook, in honor of whom our county was named, was one of the most brilliant men of his day, and had been a member of Congress since the admission of the Sate. The large majority by which Duncan was elected testified the estimate placed upon the administration of his duties as State Senator, short though it was.

There is not time, and this is not the occasion to enter into the details of his busy life at the National Capitol. The theme of the evening points to later years. Yet it is due to the development of his subsequent life that this congressional experience of Mr. Duncan should receive attention.

He was thirty-three years of age when he assumed his federal responsibilities. He was subsequently elected to and continued to be a member of the Twentieth, Twenty-first and Twenty-second Congresses, serving from 1827 to 1833.

Duncan made his advent at Washington from a section of the country but little known to politicians on the Atlantic coast, which constituted the majority in both houses of Congress; possibly without some of the social amenities engendered in the older States; and without that classical training which was even now being felt from Eastern collegiate institutions, then over a century old; but he came in the vigor of early manhood, with principles of manly virtue, strengthened by deep experiences, and broadened by weighty responsibilities, and with a courage founded on integrity. A Latin author well says: "Integra mens augustissima possessio" (An upright mind is the most august of possessions).

These were years notable for momentous problems before our country. He took his seat at the close of the administration of John Quincy Adams, an "administration honest and faithful," stormy and unpopular, for John Quincy Adams had no "genius for friendship, was unbending and cold; he strove against democratic majorities, and though he endeavored to make himself popular, he could never win the confidence of the growing party of democrats." Jackson's administration followed in 1829. As he has been tersely described, he was "a man sincerely patriotic and honest, but self-willed and of a violent temper." Duncan had heartily supported Jackson in the contest for the Presidency, and in the spirit and ability with which the foreign policy of the administration was conducted he fully sympathized, as he did in the President's opposition to the doctrine advanced by John C. Calhoun that a State could "nullify" a law of the United States. Against the three other acts which prominently characterized Jackson's administration, Duncan made vigorous protest—Jackson's partisanship displayed in removing most of his political opponents from office, and appointing his supporters, the first time this course was pursued in our nation's history; his arbitrary suspension, after a long struggle, of the functions of the United States Bank as the financial agent of the government; and third, his vetoing important measures, against large majorities, and especially his vetoing a majority of the measures proposed for the promotion of roads and other internal improvements by the general government, especially "the bills appropriating money for improvement of the Mississippi, Illinois and Wabash rivers, and for the harbor at Chcago." Duncan, thus having, as he believed, the interests of his constituents at heart, felt obliged to break with the administration, and in manly addresses through circulars and the press, without, however, leaving his post, advised his constituents of the reasons of his action. But with General Jackson personally he had no cause of dissatisfaction, and kept up the most friendly intercourse with him. I quote: "He believed a better patriot or a man who more sincerely loved his country, never lived."

The distinctive traits which Duncan displayed in Congress bear so close resemblance to his characteristics as Governor, a few years after, that I will briefly state a few, especially as I am able to corroborate them by his own words, taken from his diary. Three days after Jackson's inaugu-

ration he writes: "——— and myself went in ———'s room to consult about appointments in the event of any removals or vacancies. We were agreed, and opposed removals except for some good cause other than political." Again: "From the persons who surround the General, I fear he is to be improperly influenced in his first appointments. The central committee seem to consider him their fair game. Some of them are constantly with him, or about the door. I called to see the President; he says he will remove no officer on account of political opinions, unless he has used his office for electioneering. He appears liberal and I agree with him." Again: "Gov. ——— and ——— wish me to request the removal of certain officers from office, which I declined, as I am opposed to removing competent and worthy men on account of a mere difference of opinion." Again, when urged to appoint a superintendent of the lead mines on the upper Mississippi, his sound business views were shown: "I urged the necessity of their compelling the superintendent to give bond and security, as contemplated in my bill upon the subject of governing the mines. I left the secretary without much satisfaction. I immediately wrote a remonstrance to the President, as I was determined that I would clear myself of the responsibility of transferring a man from another State into Illinois, to hold an office which placed in his hands fifty thousand dollars per annum of public property, without check or security to protect the interests of the government." His protest failed, however. Again an illustration will give his views on nepotism. His brother, I quote, "wanted to be appointed Indian agent in place of one who it was reported was about to be removed, and requested his influence, this I cannot do consistently, as I am unwilling to ask or receive a favor which would place me under obligations to the executive power of the government while I am the representative of the people, as the appointment of my brother upon my request would have that tendency," etc. One other incident shows the spirit of Duncan. "Went with ———to see the President. ——— told him that his appointments in Boston gave general satisfaction; said the people expected all the John Quincy Adams men to be turned out, and urged the necessity of removals, saying the Republicans had fought hard and had gained a great victory, but if the old Federalists were left in office the battle would have to be fought over again; says if it were left to

him, he would turn them all out, as he would a parcel of dogs from a meat-house. The President laughed heartily at his remark."

Duncan's party views are best told in his own words: "Many complain that I have not sufficiently supported the party in my votes in Congress. To such I would say, I have investigated every subject upon which I have been called upon to act, with a sincere desire to obtain correct information. My votes have been governed by my best judgment and an ardent wish to promote the interest and honor of the country, without regard to what either party supported or opposed."

An old and tried friend said of Duncan: "Few men in our country have evinced more independence; neither party discipline nor popular excitement ever shook the firmness of his purpose or swerved him from the path of duty."

In 1832 a change occurs in the life of the subject of our sketch—from the Federal Congress to the governorship of our State. Time forbids an analysis of the rather complicated events which led thereto. Briefly stated, in 1832, when three congressmen were apportioned to Illinois, Joseph Duncan, the previous sole member from the State, was elected from the northern district. Governor Reynolds, who had filled the office of Governor since 1830, was elected to fill the office of congressman from one of the northern districts to take the place of Charles Slade, who died. To fill Governor Reynolds' office, after a closely contested campaign, with four opposing candidates, and with William Kinney, the former popular lieutenant governor the strongest, in 1834, with a majority of about seven thousand, Duncan was elected.

Thus we enter upon the fourth and closing division in this influential life. The first, which includes his early life, was characterized by few educational advantages, but by a rare exhibition of manly virtues, patriotic bravery, business ability and filial devotion. The second stage opened a wider field. When at the age of twenty-four he removed to our State, and in recognition of his character was commissioned as major-general of the Illinois militia, and in the following year was elected to the State Senate. The third part embraces his congressional life of eight years, an "experience which had afforded him not only a wider acquaintance with public men and a keener insight into public business, but it had also enlarged and enlightened his views on all ques-

tions relating to the successful administration of the internal affairs of a great commonwealth." The fourth division finds him, in 1834, Governor, with a wealth of careful observation, study and experience behind, an educated man, with mental powers enlightened, and with a character fitted for the highest activity and usefulness in life. So we greet Joseph Duncan on December 3d, 1834, at the age of forty, inaugurated as fifth Governor of Illinois.

And who were his predecessors in the executive chair? A slight sketch of their official terms will shed light upon Governor Duncan's administration.

"Shadrach Bond was elected the first Governor in 1818 by a practically unanimous vote." Bond was a Marylander, a farmer on the American Bottom, with a limited common school education, of convivial spirit, faithful to friends, with the experience of having been the first delegate elected to Congress from the Illinois Territory, where his faithfulness and ability was shown by securing the passage of acts for the protection of the infant settlements, and the preemption law of 1813. His official term as Governor was occupied by providing means to meet the expenses of the State government; a revision of the laws; attention to the subject of education, remarking in his first inaugural, "It is our imperious duty, for the faithful performance of which we are amenable to God and our country, to watch over this interesting subject." He even decommended the erection of a "seminary of learning." His record of four years is an honorable one.

Edward Coles succeeded him in 1822. His official life comprises an era in the history of Illinois, signalized by a series of events as imposing as they were important in their results. He was from Virginia, of influential family, college bred, had been private secretary to President Madison, special messenger to Russia, in which as James Monroe said, "He discovered sound judgment, united to great industry and fidelity." He removed to Illinois in 1819, bringing with him his ten negroes and their children, who from his strong anti-slavery views he freed, giving to each head of a family one hundred and sixty acres of land. As register of the land office at Edwardsville, to which he was appointed by President Monroe, he was brought into contact with his fellow citizens from all sections of the State, and in the contest for Governor he was elected. "He brought to these duties an unimpeachable integrity, an unswerving fidelity

to honest convictions, and a conscientious solicitude for the welfare of the people. Yet he lacked experience in executive or legislative departments of such a commonwealth." The struggle which was to make his administration memorable was the battle on the slavery question. The large proportion of immigrants from slave States and the border influence of Kentucky and Missouri made the struggle a fierce one. The Ordinance of 1787, which has been called "the second and advanced Declaration of Independence," had been passed thirty-five years before. Probably no single act of Congress was ever fraught with more important and far-reaching results.

We are reminded of the value placed to-day upon this Ordinance by the unveiling, last week, of a bronze tablet placed upon the walls of the Sub-Treasury Building, in New York City, in its commemoration. It bears the following inscription:

"On this site the United States, in Congress assembled, on the 13th day of July, in the year of our Lord 1787, and their sovereignty the twelfth, enacted an ordinance for the Government of the Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, by which it was dedicated forever to Freedom. Under another ordinance, passed here by the same body on the 27th day of the same month, Manasseh Cutler, acting for 'The Ohio Company of Associates,' an organization of soldiers of the Revolutionary Army, purchased from the Board of Treasury for settlement a portion of the waste and vacant lands of the Territory. On April 7th, 1788, Rufus Putnam, heading a party of forty-eight, began the first settlement at Marietta; and on July 15th, Arthur St. Clair, as first Governor, established civil government in the Territory. From these beginnings sprang the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin." It may be of interest to state that the most recent and valuable publication on the origin and scope of this Ordinance was written in 1892 by one of the honorary members of this Society—the late William Frederick Poole, LL. D., the first librarian of the Newberry Library.

The most significant article of this Ordinance—the sixth—nearly identical with the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, as three-quarters of a century afterwards it came from the hand of Lincoln, was the prohibition of the introduction of slavery into the Northwest Territory, as proposed by Jefferson, but without any qualification as to

time. There was ground for misunderstanding. "There were those who held the conservative view, that the slaves in the Territory, and the descendants, should remain in their previous condition, but that no more slaves should be imported into the Territory. Others went still further and contended that the Ordinance of '87 was unconstitutional, Congress having exceeded its power in adopting the sixth article. Others again claimed that the children of all slaves born after 1787 became free by virtue of the Ordinance." Time will not permit details of this contest, which for eighteen months raged with an intensity and violence never exceeded, if equaled, in our State. On the second of August, 1824, the vote was taken, which by a majority of 1,668 made Illinois a free State. Governor Coles, the most conspicuous figure in the battle, has been well called "the intrepid champion of human rights, who saved the State then and forever from the black curse of African slavery."

"In view of the services of Governor Coles, it was fitting and proper that Illinois should honor his name by giving it to a large and important county, organized Dec. 25, 1830. In the year 1833 Governor Coles removed to Philadelphia, where he died on July 7th, 1868, at the ripe age of eighty-two, and after many years of much suffering, debility and general feebleness. He is buried at 'Woodland,' near Philadelphia."

Ninian Edwards, the third Governor of our State, was elected after an exciting contest by a small plurality, and was inaugurated December 6th, 1826. For four years he held the office. He had occupied important positions both in the State and as United States Senator. His congressional life "had commanded the respect and esteem of the most distinguished statesmen of all parties." The questions brought forward in his inaugural were topics that characterized his administration—questions of taxation, State expenditures, alleged mismanagement of the banks and propositions of legislative reform. The revision of the laws was an important work reported and completed, in which Hon. Samuel D. Lockwood, well known in our city while a resident of Batavia, had a prominent part. At this time occurred the "Winnebago War," the first Indian disturbance since the Ward of 1812. The discussion of the right of the State to the public lands within its limits occupied much of one of Governor Edwards' messages. He also approved the law passed January 22, 1829, providing for the appoint-

ment of commissioners to fix upon the route of the Illinois-and-Michigan Canal. "The administration of Governor Edwards closed amid general expressions of satisfaction and good feeling." He retired to his home in Belleville, where, in 1833, he fell a victim to cholera, in consequence of his humane exertions for the relief of his afflicted neighbors."

John Reynolds, the immediate predecessor of Duncan, was of Irish parentage, and was one of the strong characters of his day. He studied law and served in the War of 1812, in a company of rangers, which gave him the subriquet of the "old ranger." He began the practice of law at Cahokia, five miles south of St. Louis, and the following advertisement appeared in a Kaskaskia paper: "To the poor people of Illinois and Missouri Territory—To the above class of mankind whose pecuniary circumstances will not admit of feeing a lawyer, I tender my professional services as a lawyer in all courts I may practice in, without fee or reward. *John Reynolds.*" It is stated that "he soon enjoyed a practice both large and remunerative." His contest with William Kinney for Governor "even surpassed the preceding one in excitement." They were both Jackson men, but the conservatism of Reynolds won him the day. In every county they spoke, mostly in the open air. It is stated, "A tree would be cut down in the forest near the town, and the stump hewed smooth, and on this the speaker took his stand—hence the origin of the phrase 'stump speeches.' "

Reynolds was inaugurated on December 9, 1830. "The event of most interest during his administration was the disturbance familiarly known as 'The Black Hawk War,' and of all the many Indian embroilments which excited the early residents of Illinois to acts of reprisal and hostility none have occupied so large a place in history or been more unduly magnified. It is the story of the calling out of eight thousand volunteers, to co-operate with fifteen hundred soldiers of the regular army in expelling from the State a band of about four hundred Indian warriors with their one thousand women and children, at an expenditure of millions of money, and three months of time, besides the loss of over a thousand lives."

But with this note of bloody conflict there were considerations of beneficent work that opened the way for enlarged plans by his successor. He recommended the establishment of a system of common schools; the improvement

of the Chicago harbor; the connection of the waters of the Illinois River with Lake Michigan. General acts of incorporation were now first passed and the subject of building railroads for the first time received attention, "upon the resignation of the Governor in November, 1834, on account of his election to Congress, William L. D. Ewing, who had been elected president of the Senate, succeeded to the executive chair—a position he held only fifteen days." It would be an interesting "composite" picture could we have such a representation of this quartette of the four Governors who preceded Governor Duncan as occupants of the executive chair in our State.

Illinois had undergone marked changes between Joseph Duncan's entrance upon political life as member of the State Senate in 1823, and when he delivered his inaugural as Governor on December 3d, 1834. Its population had increased five-fold, from 55,000 to near 270,000; its nineteen counties in 1820 had been trebled. The resources of the State had greatly increased. In 1823 the rich agricultural attractions of the "Military Tract" became known, comprising the peninsula between the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, and extending 160 miles north of the mouth of the Illinois, which had been given as a bounty to the soldiers of the War of 1812; then the soldiers returning from the Black Hawk War had spread attractive reports of the rich country to the northward, and in 1831 were formed the counties of La Salle, Rock Island and Cook. While in the earlier years the large majority of settlers came from Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee, the later emigrants were from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and New England. The fame of the advantages of cheap and rich land offered by Illinois had also spread beyond the seas, and attracted the attention of English and German artisans, laborers and farmers. The history of one of these settlements, with notes by Hon. E. B. Washburne, forms Vol. I. of the Collections of the Chicago Historical Society, a volume filled with facts of valuable and romantic interest. A great drawback to emigration and commerce, as well as serious limitation to the comfort of the early settlers, was the want of good roads. Our government appreciated this necessity when the "National Road," the admirable engineering work of its day, was projected, from the Atlantic, crossing the Alleghanies, reaching the Ohio at Wheeling, passing through the capitals of Ohio and Indiana, and "extending in Illinois

from the Wabash opposite Terre Haute to Vandalia." There were a few other "State roads," so called, used for mail stage rotes, one from Springfield to Chicago, in 1826, and one from Chicago to Decatur, in 1832, and one, which I well remember, which ran across the low prairie to the west of our city, called the "Galena Road." But little labor or money was expended upon them, none of the smaller and only a few of the larger streams being bridged. Of the arduous toils and privations of those early settlers I may not speak. They were hard upon the men, but chiefly the privations and sacrifices fell cruelly upon the heroic women. I may relate an incident told me by the late Charles B. Farwell, whose parents came from a comfortable home in central New York during the Duncan administration, to a tract of land forty-five miles west of our city, on which a log house and a limited worm fence only greeted them. The father was discouraged, and decided at once they must return, to which some of the sons at least agreed. It was referred to the mother to decide. She said, "Well, it's left to me, is it?" "Yes," they said. "Well," she said, "we shall stay right here and work it out; I have no fears of the result." We know the results in this case. I could give other illustrations that come nearer home to me than even the experiences of my life-long friends, the Farwell family.

We now enter upon the four years of Governor Duncan's administration, years pregnant with issues momentous in their relations to the young State—and no one was more familiar with the State than he; he knew its history, knew its present conditions, its necessities, and had a firm belief in its future, in the expression of which in all his utterances runs an encouraging and enthusiastic view. It is natural, then, that in his inaugural message to the legislature of 1834 he should bring forward with special emphasis three subjects—Education, Internal Improvements and Reliable Banking Facilities.

First—Education. Ten years before, when a member of the State Senate, had he introduced a bill for the establishment of common schools in Illinois, which became a law. Now, with strong language, did he throw his augmented influence in favor of the same action. He says: "A government like ours, controlled and carried on by the will of the people, should use all the means in its power to enlighten the minds of those who are destined to exercise so

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important a trust. This and every consideration connected with the virtue, elevation and happiness of man, and the character and prosperity of our State, and of our common country, calls upon you to establish some permanent system of common schools by which an education may be placed within the power, nay, if possible, *secured* to every child in the State." And he went farther than this, recommending the subject of *colleges*. He says: "The State has at its disposal a considerable fund for the establishment and support of colleges—institutions of learning of a more liberal character, although of less vital importance than a system of common schools, and second only to them in importance." While the public mind was not quite ready to adopt these views, it is stated that they had their influence, and led the legislature of 1854-'55 to adopt into a law the bill prepared by Ninian W. Edwards for the system of common schools now in force.

In regard to internal improvements, he urged with great force "the necessity of the completion of the canal from the Illinois River to Lake Michigan, wide enough for steamboats to pass." He urged—I quote—"the splendid results which will follow from the completion of a work that will enable us to sell at an increased value our agricultural and mineral productions." A law was passed providing for borrowing $500,000 for constructing the canal, and the appointment of a Board of Commissioners for its expenditure. It also authorized a loan of $12,000, by Cook County, at ten per cent interest, from the county school fund for the erection of a court house. The laying out of public highways was urged, and commissioners were appointed therefor.

In regard to banking facilities, which was strongly pressed, Governor Duncan did not recommend the charter of the State Bank, which was adopted at that session, but expressed an opinion against it. He presents, however, some conservative considerations he would favor, "provided it should be considered expedient to establish a bank, a measure I cannot *at present* advise."

A second—a special—session of this Assembly was called, and met on December 7th, 1835. The loan for the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal had failed because it lacked the pledge of the State for its payment. A law was passed authorizing this, and enlarging the commissioners' powers. The loan was made, and was the

means of completing the canal. In his message Governor Duncan urged the importance of other works of internal improvements, but opposed the making of them *by the State,* recommending them to be built by private individual enterprise. His argument is a strong one.

The tenth general assembly convened December 5th, 1836. It included a remarkable body of lawmakers. Abraham Lincoln was there, and I find his name on the Committee on Public Accounts and Expenditures; by his side sat Stephen A. Douglas; and in the contest for speaker they both voted for the same candidate. There was O. H. Browning, a prospective Senator and future cabinet officer; John Logan, father of Gen. John A. Logan; Richard M. Cullom, father of Senator Shelby M. Cullom; John A. McClernand, afterward member of Congress, and a general in the Civil War; Jesse K. Dubois, afterwards State Auditor for eight years; Gen. James Shields, Col. John J. Hardin, William A. Richardson and near twenty other names of special note in professional life. It is worthy of remark that of the leaders in this brilliant array, three—Lincoln, Baker and Hardin—met with death by violence in their country's service.

In the regular session of the tenth assembly, Governor Duncan reiterated his previously expressed views on State affairs; and again pressed a bill for the establishment of common schools, repeating the weighty words used by him in the preamble to his Senate bill of ten years before. At this session the bill was passed "to establish and maintain a general system of internal improvements," the work to be done by the State on its credit. This bill, when passed, was laid before the council of revision, then composed of the Governor and judges of the Supreme Court, for its approval. The bill was not approved, but was returned with the objection—I quote—"that such works can only be made safely and economically in a free government by citizens, or by individual corporations, aided or authorized by government." The bill, when returned, however, was again passed by the constitutional majority, and became a law, notwithstanding the wise and statesman-like and heroic recommendations of the Governor. The disastrous results of this stupendous folly I will not detail. Some works went forward, but at extravagant cost. In 1826 New York built the first railroad in the United States, connecting Albany and Schenectady. Twelve years later Illinois had the honor of building the